

# THE CEA CRITIC

Formerly THE NEWS LETTER of the College English Association

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## On The State of Our Profession

(Excerpts from  
Four Correspondents)

—(1)—

Surely with the drop in enrollment which faces us, the muddy thinking crowding the newspapers and periodicals, the substitution of television pap for the rudiments of literacy which once were derived from youthful reading, and the increasingly hysterical cries for political reliability in the classroom, it may be that the state of our profession requires some examination and prescription.

—(2)—

We expect to lose as many students as any private organization of our type will, and I understand the Administration is planning re-entrenchments in line with our expectations. Like many others, I am re-evaluating the necessity of staying in the academic field—especially a school with little endowment.

—(3)—

I'm not too certain what fate awaits me next year. Here we have no idea as to our status. We have been forewarned, however, that an enrollment decrease of about one third is expected. Unless the university lines up some government training programs I fear that a lot of us will be out of a job, perhaps even out of the teaching profession.

As a matter of fact, I'm about convinced that academic indifference on the upper levels of our profession is undermining the future of college teaching. Several of my friends have vowed that they're through if no jobs are available next year. Civil service or something else is preferable to starvation wages and complete insecurity.

Sometimes I feel the same way myself. I'm worse off financially than I was as a graduate student. I often ask myself whether I'm not sacrificing myself to a specious ideal, particularly in English where so much snobbery prevails.

Surely the study of literature cannot be divorced from the brutal realities of living. The spirit may be willing to condition itself to self-deception, but unfortunately the flesh rebels. I rather think that our program of English studies in this country too often subordinates interest in the dynamic forces that operate in our lives—economics, politics, government. I'm sure that the hours I devoted to Old and Middle English were wasted by com-

parison with the same amount of work in economics or politics—for that matter, even science.

I must apologize for subjecting you to this diatribe on the inadequacies of English and teaching, but here where the passion of blind dedication seems to be so important, one cannot help thinking of price controls, inflation, etc.

—(4)—

I am still snowed under, but no longer with research and applications. In September I found employment with a business firm. While this work does not appeal to me quite as much as teaching literature would, it does afford me a decent living, which teaching threatened not to.

My experience in job-hunting with the colleges was disgusting. I sent out hundreds of inquiries and scores of longer applications. As a result of all this, I got a chance at exactly one job, and it was teaching journalism, which I do not particularly desire to do. In desperation to get an entering wedge, I almost took this job. However, when I sat down to figure out just how I was going to make a considerable move and support my wife and myself at today's inflated prices and rentals on \$3600 a year, I had a decided change of heart and withdrew.

Quite objectively, I think it is a great pity that I could not find a suitable place in the academic world at a living wage. I have a passionate devotion to literature and am confident of my ability to communicate my enthusiasm; I have some skill and fairly extensive practical experience in writing; I have devoted the past five years of my life to full-time intensive study of literature and related subjects; my undergraduate work, done at a teachers' college of excellent standing, was devoted mainly to English, with a substantial minor in social studies; my military experience was broadening and was largely devoted to teaching, training, and public relations work. I have read avidly and intelligently since I was five years old, having learned to read before I went to school.

At ..... I was president of the Graduate English Club. Also, I made the highest mark in the Graduate Record English Literature test that the Dean of the Graduate School had ever seen there. I attended undergraduate college on a state scholarship won in competitive examination with other high school students of my

county. On the basis of these facts, I feel that it is fairly well beyond dispute that I am well qualified for the profession that I aspired to. Yet I got hardly a smell at a job—and that one hardly suitable and miserably underpaid.

I rehash all this not out of self-pity—for I can take care of myself in other fields if necessary—but out of an honest and burning indignation that high qualifications can and do go begging in a field that certainly, from my observation, is not oversupplied with talent. I realize that this probably sounds boastful. I hope not. But if it does, let it. I have suffered too long under the intolerable guff that passes for instruction in our institutions of "higher learning" not to have a fairly accurate yard-stick for assessing my own qualifications as they compare with those of many of the entrenched mediocrities now cluttering up the field. If I sound bitter, it is because I am.

My reason for sending this tirade to you, is that I think that you and the College English Association may be in a position to do something about it. Certainly something needs to be done, and that quickly. If my experience were an isolated instance, it could be dismissed as a personal misfortune. Such is not the case, however. Good people are either leaving or, worse yet, never entering the profession, in droves. They do so for two main reasons. First, they are not paid a decent living wage. Second, they are confronted with a perfectly asinine set of requirements for entry into the profession and for maintenance of position once they are in.

As examples of the latter, I cite you the idiotically exaggerated importance attached to the Ph. D. degree and to a "bibliography." This business of trying to judge a man's literary taste or teaching skill on the basis of how many unreadable articles he has written on subjects of no interest or importance for deservedly unread publications is the antithesis of common sense, the nadir of intelligence. As for the Ph. D. requirement—I have almost completed the requirements for mine, so I do not speak invidiously—it makes sense only if the degree represents the successful completion of an intelligent program of study and work, administered by vital and intelligent guides. I believe that no further comment is necessary on this point.

I hope that this outburst does not repel you. I am motivated to a

great extent, of course, by my personal disappointment in being unable to find employment in a field that I love. It is keenly disappointing to me not to be able to share the beauties and exaltations, the stimulation and inspiration, the knowledge and the sense of wonder, the keener, heightened, and immeasurably extended experience in living that I have found in literature. This, however, is relatively unimportant.

The important thing is what is happening to higher education in America, and consequently to our whole society, as a result of the misguided policies which govern our colleges and the selection of their teachers. The deaf are leading the blind in fruitless, never-ending circles, and they brook no interference with their somnambulist dance. (Please don't gather from this that I have never had inspired or stimulating teachers. I have had, but they were in a shocking minority.)

Well, I am sure that you had no idea your kind inquiry would elicit any such polemic as this has turned out to be. I feel much better, however, now that I have unloaded my grievances—if that is any consolation to you, who have had to suffer this "eyebeating"—to coin a phrase.

As you know by now, I was unable to attend the meeting in New York. It would have been rather pointless for me, anyhow, regardless of how much I might have enjoyed it. I shall be dropping my membership in CEA, not because I want to, but because it would mean a needless expense to me when I am engaged in other fields of endeavor. Please accept my best wishes for success, however; it seems to me that you are on the right track. May your efforts prosper during the new year and thenceforth. Since I do not anticipate making any further efforts to get into the teaching field—feeling that I have done more than my share in that direction without reward—I probably shall not have occasion to write to you again. Please be assured, therefore, that my best wishes follow you and CEA.

## NEXT ANNUAL CEA MEETING

DECEMBER 27, 1951  
6:00 - 9:00 P.M.

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

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## We Stand In Danger?

Speaking, on Washington's birthday, to Yale Alumni, President Griswold urged colleges to reject a "panicky approach" toward the national emergency and to insist on fulfilling their mission of providing the nation's leadership. This plea was in contrast to the attitude reported early in the year, at the annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges. Nine hundred college presidents, deans, and other educational leaders from six hundred and fifty institutions of higher education attended the Conference.

"Not in recent years," wrote Dr. Benjamin Fine, in the New York Times for Jan. 10, "have the delegates to this association been as visibly worried as they were today."

We have welcomed Dr. Griswold's deprecation of a "panicky approach" toward our national emergency. We would not have THE CEA CRITIC turn Cassandra or become the "frustration forum" which Prof. Nethercot once asserted it to be. Yet as the organ of our association of college teachers of English, THE CRITIC must help us to face facts, to articulate our attitude toward these facts—however unpleasant they may be, and to see what we can do about them.

Hence, on page 1 of this issue, we have presented comments by some of our members who have felt deeply the impact of our present professional crisis. Some of the statements are brief; some extended. Some are by younger men who have unsuccessfully sought entry into our profession or who have but recently found a beginner's place in it. Others are by men already well established in American higher education. All carry the same burden.

These comments are not to be dismissed merely as the gripes of a few frustrated malcontents. They are part of a much larger picture. And we must see them as particular instances of President Conant's prophecy of "serious and painful readjustment and some sacrifice" during our condition of being "partially mobilized but not in global war for many years"; of Dr. Richard Thornton's declaration that, in the radical changes produced by military needs, "the humanities are likely to suffer most"; of President Wriston's prediction that, because of the inflation, "few privately controlled colleges will be able to balance their budgets this year", and that the effect "on the public institutions will be even more dis-

astrous than it is in private schools."

We must see these comments as part of the motivation to President Lewis Eldred's exhortation to educators throughout the country to use "all imagination possible to keep college staffs intact," and to his warning that, once the faculty is dispersed, it would be difficult if not impossible to reassemble it. We must see them as documenting Dr. Fine's report that, as a result of "a sharp drop in enrollment 20,000 to 25,000 faculty members of American colleges and universities either will be dismissed from their jobs this year or will not be replaced when they leave for military or Government service or war jobs."

We must take them as signs of the "grave danger" that Dr. Ralph Himstead has seen as resulting from "mass dismissals" of college teachers. They are support for his declaration that the academic profession might thus be "wrecked." They bear out his further observations (1). that the educational profession has become less attractive in recent years; (2). that, if it becomes a "hazardous profession", it will be difficult, when need arises, to recruit men and women for classroom teaching; and (3). that "we stand in danger of lowering the morale of our teachers."

Yet the generally dark picture is relieved here and there; and we must see this too. President Robert W. McEwen reports that Hamilton College "is definitely seeking to find supplemental work in this vicinity for those whose teaching load may drop", with the aim "that any faculty members whom we cannot continue to use full time are kept available to the college for the better days which we hope lie ahead." The Commission on Christian Higher Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. has called on "every Protestant denomination, through its Board of Christian Education, synods or conferences, to provide emergency funds to keep colleges open and faculties intact."

President Conant has recommended that faculty members be rotated in the Federal Government service, instead of the "duration" practice of World War II, in order to keep Harvard and other education centers intact during a continuing emergency. Dr. Himstead insists that if college teaching is to remain a profession, it must "follow professional rules", and that the first rule will be to place all men who are dismissed on leaves of absence so that they will re-

tain their connections with their institutions; for, if the faculties are dispersed now, they will not be available in later years when they are needed again. Prof. E. M. Fleissner, of Wells College, recommends the following in a letter written to the Editor of the New York Times:

Now is the time for the foundations to come to the aid of the institutions rather than to support individuals. If they could grant funds to allow the colleges to retain valuable faculty members on part time and to enable these men to do research in their fields, what appears now as a major catastrophe might turn out to be an interval of study and progress of the greatest benefit to many smaller institutions and their staffs.

Finally, we have been given this suggestion: Senator James E. Murray has introduced a bill to set up a program for \$300,000,000 a year as Federal aid to the states for education. Senator Lister Hill has warned the Senate that, unless such Federal aid is forthcoming, our schools will impede the defense effort to such a degree as to spell the difference between victory or defeat in a war; and United States Commissioner of Education Earl J. McGrath has made a similar plea. Why, asks one of our members, should not such Federal aid be applied to the preservation of our American system of higher education as well as to the improvement of our primary and secondary schools.

What do CRITIC readers think of these suggestions? What other suggestions do you have? The columns of our newsletter are open to you. We urge you to write.

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## Something To Offer— Something To Gain

One of the sessions at the fall meeting of the New England CEA has prompted a clarifying exchange of letters with the editor of THE CEA CRITIC. This was the session on Literature in the Catholic Curriculum. Prof. Frederick W. Holmes (Northeastern) presided; and the Reverend Carol L. Bernhardt, S.J. (Weston College and the Boston College Graduate School) was speaker.

Father Bernhardt contended that "Education has for its end, man; and man has for his end, life, eternal hereafter, temporal now." Basing his contention on Pope Pius XI's Encyclical on Education, the speaker said that "among the means to man's end is education: the means of education are the subjects in the curriculum." A summary of Father Bernhardt's address follows:

"In the curriculum literature holds a prominent place. And not only English Literature. The Church has encouraged the study of the ancient Latin and Greek classics, as well as the literature of modern vernaculars.

"The Church has pretty much appropriated the philosophy of Aristotle and made it her own. History tells what man has done; philosophy lays down and explains the principles of man's activity; literature shows the principles in a particular setting or instance.

"In the Catholic scheme of education, religion is supreme; philosophy is the orientation; literature is the mouthpiece. Science is not autonomous: it must speak some relation to human life. Literature

is not autonomous: it studies man's doings and must at last yield to ethical considerations. Nor is art autonomous: it subverts revelation. Nor philosophy: its whole ambit presupposes man and man thinking.

"The Church does not look to literature to vindicate all her doctrines. She does look to literature to see in it a vindication of man, whole and entire, of man as a free, intelligent, responsible agent, living highest when he scorns the lowest, when he reacts to the transcendent above the transient and the tangible.

"For the rest, the teacher of literature in a Catholic college, does not differ much, if at all, from his fellow teacher of literature in a non-Catholic college, in recognizing literature as a handmaid, a servant, a lamp, at least a candle, to enlightenment, richness, wisdom."

Reporting his impressions of the session at which Father Bernhardt spoke, Prof. Holmes has observed: "The speaker very clearly set forth the practice and discipline of Catholic colleges, and the reasoning by which, in orthodox circles, they are supported.

The questions raised after his talk had to do with assignment, in non-Catholic colleges, of books and readings on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, and the likelihood that Catholic students would be embarrassed by such assignments.

"The general attitude of the questioners appeared to be that they would prefer to avoid offending Catholic students in that matter. Father Bernhardt explained two interesting points: first, that teachers and students engaged in advanced work may usually secure permission to read forbidden books; and, second, that books placed on the *Index* are not necessarily there for all time but may be removed when they are thought no longer to be dangerous. He said that *Paradise Lost* is not now on the *Index*, though once it was."

Not long after the regional CEA conference at which Father Bernhardt presented his talk, the editor of THE CEA CRITIC received the following letter:

The fall meeting of the CEA at Brandeis was enjoyable and stimulating enough to make a newcomer like myself look forward to future programs. There was, however, one thing which I think was rather unfortunate and might be avoided another time. I have been wondering why Fr. Bernhardt was asked to talk on

Literature in the Catholic Curriculum. Why not simply Literature in the College Curriculum?

I wonder if this was based on the mistaken idea that the English curriculum in a Catholic college is different from that in secular colleges, that we must therefore be set apart and given special handling.

We teach the same material. I teach Freshman Comp., and haven't yet been guilty of introducing a Catholic verb! In the period that I devote to appreciation of literature I use McCallum's *College Omnibus*—not even a Catholic text. In my survey of English literature I begin with *Beowulf* just as anyone else does, and end as best I can somewhere between the Romantics and the Victorians. In American Lit., I use Foerster.

It is only when literature involves philosophy and theology that there is any difference, and then it is a difference not in curriculum but in interpretation. But even in a Catholic college a variety of interpretation is encouraged.

Perhaps the title of Fr. Bernhardt's paper was intended to attract the Catholic college groups. I don't know—you see, I am only guessing—but if that was the reason, then that is the surest way to keep us away. We don't teach Catholic literature; we teach literature. We have the same problems as English teachers in secular colleges; we believe that, in a free exchange of ideas and difficulties with secular groups, we have something to offer and something to gain.

I think that if Fr. Bernhardt's paper had been offered as Literature in the College Curriculum it would have had a more general appeal and would have brought questions from the floor that would have been stimulating and edifying. I would also like to suggest that Fr. Bernhardt's splendid paper be printed in the CEA CRITIC or whatever other publication the Association has for such things. If, as I think, there are some mistaken notions circulating about our work in Catholic colleges, the paper would certainly help to clarify those notions. Beyond that, any English teacher, anywhere, will profit from the paper.

FORTUNATA CALIRI  
Mt. St. Mary College

Inviting the Program Chairman to comment on this letter, the editor received this reply:

Thank you for sending me Miss Fortunata Caliri's informative letter of comment and inquiry about the choice of "Literature in the Catholic Curriculum" as the title for Father Bernhardt's talk at the Fall Meeting of the CEA.

In selecting that topic for the program we were guided by the thought that the Catholic colleges might have developed some methods of teaching literature or some concepts of the place and importance of literature in the curriculum which would be of interest and value to English teachers in other colleges. We had heard, for example, that the English courses in some Catholic colleges were devoted to an unusually intensive study of a few texts. The nature and extent of that study would, we thought, be of general interest.

We believe also that the Catholic colleges might have an advantage over others in the long possession of a clearly defined conception of the purpose of college education and of the relation of literature to that purpose, and that their experience with a directed education would be helpful to the many teachers in other colleges who have recently been engaged in the search for a principle of unity on the secular level. It was not differences as such that we thought important but rather the opportunity to find practical suggestions in whatever differences there might be.

I am grateful to Miss Fortunata Caliri for calling attention to the need of an explanation and to Father Bernhardt for his kind acceptance of the invitation and his excellent talk.

OSBORNE EARLE

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## A Four Year College Writing Program

In its post-war curricular revision the faculty of Colgate University decided to eliminate "required freshman English." Excision of this traditional rite does not appear to have been fatal. On the contrary it has forced us to restudy the problem at which freshman English has customarily been directed, and to discover other—possibly more realistic—ways of dealing with it. Broadly, the procedures developed since 1946 constitute a four year plan for obtaining sustained attention to writing throughout the curriculum, with due attention to priorities, phases, and degrees of responsibility. It combines personal guidance and group instruction; direct teaching and an indirect "functional" approach; voluntary individual motivation and mass requirements. It also revises the role of an English department to include enlisting the support of other departments to maintain the minimum proficiency formerly hoped for through a freshman composition course.

Concerning the requirement and the position in the curriculum of "Composition" or "Communication" courses, the following observations may be ventured:

1. Such required courses seldom achieve the basic aim (sustained minimal competence in later work)
2. Most freshmen do not actually need the direct instruction in the mechanics of writing normally emphasized in freshman English courses. What they do need is to apply in habitual practice what they already know—and to continue to write under criticism in all courses.
3. Even for those who need remedial attention a voluntary learning situation is better than one of direct compulsion.

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Until a strong desire to improve has been created, there is little prospect of improvement. This desire can be created in various ways.

4. Motivation, notoriously poor in such courses, can be improved by waiting until the student has encountered the communication demands of subject-matter courses on the college level.

5. Non-English courses offer propitious conditions for developing good substance and organization, and most of the other desirable qualities in student writing—provided that the staffs can be induced to require writing and to take effectiveness of communication into account in grading papers.

6. It is in these subject-matter courses, rather than in the separated "English" or "Communication" course that the operational standards of college writing are actually determined. In our concern for good standards we have therefore shifted our attention in the freshman year to the real needs and practices of students in these non-English courses. This "functional" program, leading up to our official Communication Course in the sophomore year, and extending beyond it into the upper class years—makes it possible to assign to that course a central position in the curriculum, and a more mature function than "baby English." This course is required, not as a disciplinary course, but as part of the Core program in general education.

In outline, the chief elements of the plan are these:

1. Analysis of entrance test results by the Psychology Department (reading) and the English Department (writing). Supplementary tests in speaking and listening are contemplated.

2. Individual appraisal and counseling by preceptors. Preceptors are not English teachers but general counselors, concerned with the student's general development. They naturally take an interest in his ability to read, write, listen, and speak; they orient him towards the facilities available for self-improvement, and keep a record of his progress.

3. Provision of remedial services in the freshman year, through a Reading Laboratory and a Writing Laboratory. These are carefully not called "remedial", and acceptance of their services is voluntary on the part of the student.

4. Placing prime responsibility on the student himself to apply, particularly in writing, what he already knows; to edit and rewrite, using a handbook (Perrin: *Writer's Guide and Index to English*); and to avail himself of the consultation services if needed.

5. A freshman program of functional writing in non-English Core courses (Science, Public Affairs, Philosophy and Religion) and in non-English elective courses. The writing problems are rooted in the problems of the course. Mimeographed assignments are prepared by English staff members in collaboration with the Core staffs. The directions are specific and illustrative. There is a planned calendar, and a sequence progressing from simple (e. g., Summary) to more complex (e. g., Analysis). The papers are read and graded by the Core staffs, with effectiveness of communication taken into account in the grading. The responsibility of these instructors has been carefully limited. We have supplied a checklist, on the basis of which they circle the predictable offenses, and they make critical comments on organization; but they refer to the English Department any student unable to revise a paper without expert help. Most weaknesses, we find, are the result of carelessness or lack of effort; and we therefore stress editing and rewriting in the assignment instructions.

6. A required course in Communication in the sophomore year. This includes practice in speaking and writing, beginning

## I Should Like To Ask

The Sept. issue of THE CEA CRITIC proved especially interesting to me coming as it did on the heels of our Texas State Teachers Association meeting.

The luncheon meeting of the English teachers had a speaker who concluded with the forecast that "the coming of core-curriculum is inevitable though its progress is slow." In the buzz which followed, one of the teachers said her University of Colorado professor explained the point very well: the English teachers have brought the situation on themselves by being so "eighteenth-century meticulous in grammar."

I was so indignant at this unfounded accusation I had to answer, in effect, as follows. Agreement of subject and verb may be "meticulous" to a so-called Progressive Education teacher, but it just happens to be vital to all communication in life. Fundamentals in spelling and in writing may mean the difference between life and death in a laboratory. The arrangement of chairs in a cozy circle doesn't necessarily mean students will learn or speak easily and accurately. It's not enough to say teacher must understand the student—we must expect the student to exert himself. Aids in the learning process are all right if of proper, stimulating kinds and given where real need is evident; but a substitution of the comics for a little sweat on the part of the student will prove harmful.

In the twenties and thirties our college students came with so-called old-fashioned training in grammar; and as a result we opened the freshman year with paragraph study, and so on. In many of our colleges today we begin with grammar review which includes parts of speech, location of the word which is the subject, and such simple facts.

In those years, too, students had a proper attitude toward the learning process. A student didn't drop a course just because it was difficult. He didn't dodge a foreign

at the level of competence reached functionally by the end of the freshman year. It is also, however, a broader study of problems in communication.

7. A Sophomore General Examination (at the end of the sophomore year)—including a writing test, and followed by referral to the Labs. or to further English courses.

8. Continued attention to writing by instructors in all courses and concentration programs. We have not yet organized this for the upperclass years, but are encouraged by the excellent inter-staff cooperation in our freshman program to proceed with it as rapidly as possible.

9. Offering elective courses in writing and speaking to students who want to improve beyond minimum requirements.

STRANG LAWSON  
Colgate College

language. He didn't expect an "A" just because he did write a theme. He didn't ask at registration "what good will this course do me?" He didn't react impatiently when certain standards of accuracy were required.

And the idea that the study of a social science will motivate a student to use excellent English is absurd beyond measure.

Because of the fact we didn't have to double back and do a grammar school review; because the students knew how to spell; because the students had been accustomed to real study, our teaching task in earlier years was more pleasurable—and it was easier! Our work now is heavier. It is almost impossible to grade several thousand papers each school year (Texas expects 10 themes per student each term in addition to tests), make up grade-school deficiencies, and also catch up with college.

I should like to ask: why is it one department is permitted to dictate "methods" to all departments of learning? Is the (Progressive) Education Department so lacking in content it must substitute "Methodology" in order to survive?

We English teachers have plenty of our own methods and we have wonderful content in our courses. We can do a better job if we're let alone to teach and don't have to be retarded by "methods" which have resulted in tremendous losses in reading ability, spelling, grammar, and coherence.

INA BETH McGAVOCK  
Trinity University

P.S. I forgot to use the word "functional"!

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## I've Been Reading

J. Gordon Eaker  
Jersey City Junior College  
Literary Editor

### On Grammar and Grammarians

(Re: English Grammar by Ralph B. Allen, American Book Co., 1950). This book begins with the observation that language, "while interesting in itself, is a means to an end and not as grammarians and philologists often assume an end in itself." The author of this Introduction is seemingly an iconoclast like Jespersen, Leonard,

Fries, or Pooley, doing his best to shock schoolmarms and justify current usage. The rest of the book has no truck with such opinions, and one wonders whether Mr. Allen should be held responsible for both his introduction and the text.

English Grammar can be read with pleasure by all those who look back to the days of giants,—to Richard Grant White, to Bishop Lowth, to Priscian, and to others who thought that their intuitions were infallible. A few readers, it is true, may find parts of the book difficult to read. For instance, an early section is made up largely of Old English paradigms without any clue as to how Old English was pronounced, but then, as Mr. Allen says, it's time we gave up spoon-feeding students. For the greater part, the book is delightfully forthright. Under predicate nominative we find this unequivocal statement:

"A noun or pronoun following to be and identical with its subject takes the nominative case. . . . The boys who did it were they." Here is no beating around the bush, no compromise with what people have been saying and writing for centuries. English teachers who are baffled by the many ways we have of expressing futurity will be delighted to find that the only correct way to form the simple future is to use "shall in the first and will in the second and third persons." The usefulness of this book for the study of general language will be evident. For example, a half page is given to the persons of nouns: "I, John, am coming. (first person) How is my good friend this morning? (second person)." Though of limited application to English, this information may be of great value to any one who later studies Ojibway.

It is too bad that we have had to wait so long for this English Grammar; it should have been written two hundred or more years ago.

GEORGE S. McCUE  
Colorado College

### Prof. Allen's Rejoinder

In his flippant analysis of my book, Mr. McCue has given me very little worthy of comment beyond the obvious one of regret, that a college teacher should exhibit such bad manners. The little substance there is to what he says is sufficient to prove that he might himself profit from some of the fundamental principles set forth in the Grammar.

Two of his exhibitions in the first paragraph follow. There is no need to go further:

(a) "This book begins with the observation that language is a means to an end, etc. . . ." It is hardly necessary to point out that the that clause is a noun clause and gives the substance of the observation. Even grammar school usage requires a comma here to distinguish a noun from an adjective, or descriptive and identifying clause. Mr. McCue might have played the odds (2 to 1) on the comma in the outside hope that the adjective clause might have been at least non-restrictive. But there we are—getting too technical and deep for Mr. McCue again!

(b) "... like Jespersen, Leonard, Fries, or Pooley, doing his best, etc. . . ." Here Mr. McCue has a participle modifying the wrong noun. Not so funny perhaps as "Eating my lunch in the train, the scenery slipped by", but just as wrong and misleading! Might I suggest that he might tie up the "doing" with "me" by the most obvious and coherent use of a compound predicate:

"... is seemingly an iconoclast, like Jespersen, Leonard, Fries, or Pooley, and does his best. . ."

Now for his specious wit and meretricious learning!

(a) "Though of limited application to English, this information [about persons of nouns] may be of great value to anyone who studies Ojibway." This grammar is designed partly for students of German, French, and, yes, the Ojibway. Even Indians have standards!

(b) "It is too bad that we had to wait so long for this English Grammar; it should have been written two hundred or more years ago." In another place, Mr. McCue expresses the tearful regret, that I neglected to give the pronunciation of Old English forms. These two contrary points of view of wanting to have less as well as more of the "old stuff" indicate that he has an illogical mind as well as one incapable of understanding what he reads. The paradigms were given in the introduction to show Old English endings that account for our modern survivals in -s, -es, -en, 's, etc. Obviously the pronunciation of a stem syllable would have no bearing on the ending except to level it off.

(c) Re his tirades against shall and will and the predicate nominative!

There he has me! After all, there is something colorful, if indicative, about: "it ain't him" and "he shouldn't ought to have did it."

No one who faces the ignorance of modern high school graduates in sentence structure, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension can advocate the present neglect of, or indifference to, some formal study in those branches of English work. This grammar is a college grammar designed to repair some of the damage and to serve the needs of people whose ambitions in life and abilities are likely to throw them into competition with people who know the English language. If Mr. McCue has no such students, he has no worries and may safely continue to neglect the study.

RALPH B. ALLEN  
Rutgers University (Camden)

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## NECEA Poetry Panel—Brandeis Conference

The participants were all practicing modern poets, two of whom were also teachers. The four members of the panel were John Holmes, Richard Eberhart, Byron Vazakas, and Richard Wilbur. The chairman was Milton Hindus. The principal questions before the panel had to do with the best means of projecting modern poetry to the consciousness of students.

Mr. Eberhart emphasized the quality of enthusiasm in the teacher himself. And he stressed too the desirability of a great range of enthusiasm in his approach. "A largeness and catholicity of understanding and of sympathetic comprehension should be the ineradicable tools of the instructor." It is the duty of the teacher to analyze each poem rather than to "impose dogmatic assertions about value on the student."

There cannot be too much analysis, tearing apart of the poem. In spite of Wordsworth's fears, the creative act cannot be murdered by dissection. "No true poem can be destroyed by the utmost of examination."

Certain remarks by Mr. Eberhart pointed to the fact that he assumed that the best teacher of modern poetry was himself a poet. Freshness and enthusiasm—these are the infectious qualities of a teacher which open the student to the influence of poetry, and this genesis is important even when the earliest enthusiasms are later critically rejected. "Who would wish to forget a purple-swooning period when Swinburne was enthralling?"

A very important paragraph from Mr. Eberhart's talk was the following: "I should think for undergraduate courses the farther away from dogma and stock academic responses a teacher can get, the nearer he can relate poetry to the deepest spiritual resource at his command. He must strive toward his peculiarity."

The "peculiarity" of the poet himself was the topic of the talk by Byron Vazakas. "A poet is a natural object of suspicion," he began strikingly. This suspicion stems from the fact often that the layman "has been exposed at an unripe age to Shakespeare, an author who should be the culmination of his reading and instruction and experience." The result of university training is often no happier, for the student, terrorized by the canons of criticism, "may well become as inhibited by his knowledge as he might be by his ignorance."

Mr. Vazakas was not at all sanguine about the possibility of teaching poetry. "One can not teach poetry, only what it is about, and that justifies, in many ways, the academic approach." The reason why poetry cannot be taught and why the poet is an object of suspicion is that "The Greeks were right, poetry is madness."

The academic instructor does not realize the preeminence of the artist to his art. Fundamentally, the form of the poem grows out of the personality of the poet. "Shelley felt exalted before he mentioned the lark. Wordsworth loved the lakes before he said so....Wallace Stevens has first of all an Epicurean sense of luxury....William Carlos Williams has as mad an eye as Don Quixote, or as Yeats said he himself had. "The lack of this realization results in the fact that the teacher often concerns himself with the mechanics of verse and remains far away from the dangerous spirit which informs it."

Richard Wilbur emphasized the device of reading aloud in the communication of a piece of literature in its totality. Analysis tends to focus upon the part, and the result is that "students simply cannot put Humpty Dumpty together again." Most teachers neglect the music of a poem or a story in favor of its argument, because they are afraid that reading aloud will "seem like a time-killer, or because they are fearful of falling into showmanship." But in focusing attention on the argument of a poem, they forget the element which makes the argument worth hearing in the first place.

Mr. Wilbur gave specific examples of what might be gained by reading aloud: "In reading Robert Frost it is necessary very often to adopt the speech of New England with its characteristic stresses and rhythms, in order to make certain lines scan at all. Only by reading aloud, it seems to me, can a teacher convey the full impact of many of Frost's poems. In Joyce's short stories we frequently find... an irruption of the vocabulary, rhythm and tone of the main character's voice into the stream of the narrative prose. I do not see how the full effect of this device can be conveyed save by a very expressive reading-aloud on the part of the teacher."

The burden of John Holmes's remarks apparently sprang from his recent experience as an editor in the Oscar Williams' Little Treasury Series. Some of the other speakers had already mentioned the imperfections of existing anthologies and also the imperative need to make use of them in the classroom. Mr. Holmes revealed some of the difficulties of the anthologist, who not only must rely upon his taste but has to make necessary compromises with the commercial exigencies to which he is subject. Mr. Norman Pearson, from the floor, joined his own plaint, as the editor of the well-known five-volume anthology of English poetry with Mr. Auden, to that of Mr. Holmes.

Mr. Hindus, as Chairman, several times reiterated the point that the true appreciation of literature begins with an appreciation of contemporary writing which appeals with poignant immediacy to our own experience. He said that he doubted the reality of an appreciation of an art which had no understanding of the most modern manifestations of it, and he quoted as useful the touchstone for the equipment of a critic as well as of a teacher supplied by Sainte-Beuve the validity of his judgments of his contemporaries.

It is not enough, said Mr. Hindus, to become enthusiastic over the classics, for that is to cast one's vote in an election determined a long time ago. It is necessary to bring forward and to support the candidature of new classics. This we owe to literature itself, but we also owe it to education, for nothing is better calculated to arouse the interest of our students than the feeling that the professor is putting his bets on living writers (in the literal not merely figurative sense) who are far from having won the universal support of his colleagues.

## Twayne Winner

Rosemary Thomas of New York has been named winner of the second annual Twayne First Book Contest for a volume of verse, "Immediate Sun." The winning manuscript was chosen by Archibald MacLeish from more than 300 entries and will be issued this year.

The Twayne award, designed to encourage the writing and appreciation of good poetry, offers \$100 advance on royalty publication of a volume of poems by a poet not previously published in book form in the United States.



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## Southeastern CEA

The following officers were elected at the February 17 meeting of the Southeastern CEA: President: Nathan C. Starr (Rollins); vice-presidents: Edward Foster (Georgia Tech.), Paul Haines (Alabama Polytech.); secretary-treasurer: Sarah Herndon (Florida State); advisory council (list incomplete), W. H. Rogers (Florida State), Calvin S. Brown (Univ. of Georgia), P. P. Burns (Howard College).

The Georgia Tech. committee on arrangements was made up of the following: David Comer III (Chairman), Frank Baldanza, Burdett Gardner, J. A. Glominski, James B. Haman, J. B. Hamilton, Samuel Ketchin.

The afternoon session was devoted to a discussion of "Literature as General Education for Sophomores: Some Experimental Courses in Our Region." Edward Foster served as chairman; and the following were participants: Paul Haines (Alabama Polytech.), "Literature in English," Edgar E. Stanton (Converse), "Great Texts of World Literature"; F. W. Connor (Univ. of Florida), "A Comprehensive Humanities Course"; Nathan C. Starr (Rollins), "An Introduction to Literature."

It was decided that fall sessions would be correlated with annual meetings of the SAMLA.

Andrew J. Walker (Georgia Tech.) served as chairman for the organization meeting and toastmaster at the luncheon. Sir Richard W. Livingstone, vice chancellor of Oxford University, and visiting professor at Emory University, was luncheon speaker.

## IDEAS FOR WRITING:

### Readings for College Students

KENNETH L. KNICKERBOCKER  
*University of Tennessee*

This important new book represents much thought and class experimentation. The author's aim was to find in literature the best examples of writing for the topics most often used as themes for student papers, and the result is 108 selections of prose and poetry grouped under 28 specific ideas. The guiding principle in making the selections was their provocativeness. Controversial material was chosen to stimulate classroom discussion. Throughout the book the author directs attention to the student's writing problem by questions and suggestions which help him develop the *idea* in the readings in terms of his own composition needs.

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After an apology for his ignorance of American teaching ways, Sir Richard proceeded to prove that apology was quite unnecessary. For it quickly became apparent that he never moves far from the center of good thought on both sides of the Atlantic and that his ideas bear the stamp of long testing and full conviction.

We should seek, he said, to develop in our students the desire and the ability "to read first-rate literature with enjoyment." And this reading must continue throughout adult life.

And how can poetry be taught? One method, he said, is simply reading the poem aloud to the class—reading as effective as that of John Gielgud.

Another is the rational explanation of the importance of poetry. Students, Sir Richard believes, can be impressed by the fact that poetry and the fame of its makers continue through the ages while most of man's "useful" artifacts perish. They can be helped to understand that the poet is the master of the art of seeing, that he can teach them to open their own eyes to the forms and the colors of life. And even as they see more, they can discover, with his help, greater richness in their own experiences.

A technique for reading poetry should be developed. Sir Richard suggested assigning what we should call a short theme in prose on a subject treated by a well-chosen poem not known by the class. After some of the themes are read to the group, the poem is introduced—a demonstration that poetry is language of superior flexibility and intensity.

And students should be trained to visualize imagery. A teacher in the Oxford schools has succeeded in getting children of twelve to enjoy *Paradise Lost* by encouraging them to look at Milton's scenes and characters. Visualizing imagery is also a way of distinguishing between good and bad verse. In illustrations suggestive of formalism, Sir Richard analyzed the confused metaphors of lines three and four of the "The Destruction of Sennacherib" and of the seventh stanza of "A Psalm of Life."

He commended the practice of mastering one unit—stanza or scene—before moving on to the next, and mastery seems to involve an understanding of the contributions of all elements to the total effect.

The quiet close amplified the opening theme. Literature exists for enjoyment, for the enrichment of one's personal life, and for its moments of insight into timeless reality.

## Information, Please

I think that a good number of the schools in the country ought to be queried about what freshman grammars they are using, how they like them, what they object to in them, etc., and then the books used most frequently ought to be turned over to a group of men who have thorough training in modern language techniques — Bloch, Trager, Hill, Pike, Markwardt, Eckols, Kurath, Twaddell, etc. — and let these men who know a lot more about the structure of language than the vast majority of English teachers (though I don't say all) tell the members of the society in a series of articles just what these books are really worth to the student struggling with the delicacies of style and grammar.

ROBERT STOCKWELL  
University of Virginia

Have you ever thought of running something on courses in the Teaching of English? How practical are they? I think most of us are so busy looking to professional advancement along the line of conventional source hunting that we pay no attention to this needful course. We grumble because the high schools do not fit our students better for advanced work, but who equips these high school teachers so inadequately? Education departments take over the job since we don't, but they are lost in a fog of jargon.

Surely among our constituents there are many who could argue the subject from many angles. Such matters need to be discussed as curriculum-making (in States that do not have a uniform course of study for high schools); the differing levels of approach to works in the various years of advancement; the different approach to teaching a play from teaching a novel, or any other form of literature; the nature of a survey course, i.e., how many writers are to be included, and how proportion is to be maintained; the management of extra-curricular activities that fall to the English teacher, such as editing the school paper or annual, ordering and supervising the school play, illustrative matter, like the Perry Pictures, etc., etc.

If we depend on seniors to find their own way in these matters, they ignore some, worry about others, and end by giving without alteration the notes they took in our courses. Surely high school youth deserves better than that!

ERNEST LEISY  
So. Methodist Univ.

In the second annual National Book Awards, the winners were: William Faulkner, Wallace Stevens, and Newton Arvin. Mr. Faulkner was cited for his "The Collected Stories of William Faulkner", Mr. Stevens for his book of poetry "The Auroras of Autumn", and Mr. Arvin for his biography "Herman Melville."

An inventory concerning the Emily Dickinson material which left Amherst last June appears in the Houghton Library Report of accessions for 1949-50. It was prepared by William A. Jackson, assistant librarian at Harvard. Dr. Thomas H. Johnson is preparing the Harvard variorum edition of the poems of Emily Dickinson. Harvard University Press announces for publication in April "Emily Dickinson's Letters to Dr. and Mrs. Josiah Gilbert Holland", edited by their granddaughter, Mrs. Theodora V. W. Ward.

On March 3 the Newark College of Rutgers University conducted its Thirteenth Annual Contest in the Reading of Poetry. Students from forty high schools in northern New Jersey took part; judges included teachers, poets, poetry publishers, and librarians.

At the receiving end, this contest has provided much pleasure for many people. In the course of production, it has aroused new interest in poetry in many a New Jersey community.

We may be risking charges of immodesty, but we believe we have worked out a program that can easily be duplicated in other areas, and we shall be happy to send details to anyone who wants them.

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*Spring Meetings*

Joseph Hendren, regional secretary for the Middle Atlantic CEA, reports that the spring meeting of this CEA affiliate will be held April 21, at Western Maryland College, Westminster, Md.

The NYCEA will meet April 21, at Syracuse. Prof. Katherine Koller (Rochester) is chairman.

The NECEA will meet April 28, at Mount Holyoke. Prof. Alan McGee is chairman.

**PENN. CEA**

President: Bruce Dearing (U. S. Naval Intelligence School).

Place: Gettysburg College.

Date: April 28.

Central topic: "Exploring the Profession in Crisis."

Program Committee: Kenneth Longsdorf (Franklin and Marshall), Belle Matheson (Beaver).

Committee on Arrangements: Francis Mason (Gettysburg) chairman.

The Chicago CEA will meet, near the end of April, at Roosevelt College.

**INDIANA CEA**

The dinner speaker, at Anderson, Friday, May 11, will be Dr. Paul Landis, of the English Department of the University of Illinois. Prof. Landis is the author of the CEA CHAP BOOK entitled "The Survival-Quotient in Teaching Literature" (March 1948, copies still available at twenty-five cents each.)

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"The School of Letters" (formerly the Kenyon School of English) will be a separate unit within Indiana University directed by three senior fellows—John Crowe Ransom of Kenyon; Lionel Trilling of Columbia University, and Austin Warren of the University of Michigan who replaces the late Prof. F. O. Matthiessen of Harvard University.

The presiding officer at Indiana will be Dean John W. Ashton of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the administrative director of the school will be Prof. Richard B. Hudson, who also continues as director of the Indiana University Writers' Conference. Enquiries should be directed to Prof. Hudson.

As at Kenyon, the faculty of the school will be drawn from the Senior Fellows and from about twenty other distinguished literary critics and writers in this country and abroad who will be known as Fellows of the School of Letters. Approximately eight of the Fellows will be in residence and offer courses each summer.

The coming annual Notre Dame Writers' Conference (June 25-30), besides including the usual workshops in poetry and fiction, will include for the first time a workshop in the teaching of creative writing. Staff members are John T. Frederick, Richard Sullivan, John Frederick Nims, Jessamyn West and Robert Giroux.

A new Shakespeare miscellany called *The Shakespeare Newsletter* is scheduled for appearance in the last week of March. Each monthly issue will contain digests of approximately twenty popular and scholarly articles, reviews of current productions, notes on forthcoming books and articles, statistics of performances, teaching aids, foot notes, queries, club news, and original articles of about 350-400 words. The format will be newspaper in style, four pages in the first issue and perhaps more later. Subscription will be one dollar a year for ten issues.

Free copies of the first issues will be sent to anyone on receipt of a postcard request. Address inquiries (and material for publication) to Dr. Louis Marder at the English Department of The School of General Studies, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn 10, New York.

### Texas Conference College Teachers of English March 31, College Station

Morning session: T. F. Mayo, presiding.

1. "Four years of a Program for Junior Examination in Written Composition," E. G. Ballard, North Texas State College.

2. Report of the workshop project.

3. A Panel Discussion: The Proposed Law for the Certification of Teachers of English, led by Autrey Nell Wiley, Texas State College for Women.

Business meeting: E. E. Leisy, Southern Methodist University, presiding.

Luncheon: Address, "Poetry, Politics, and Philosophy," T. V. Smith, Syracuse University.

Afternoon session, L. N. Wright, presiding.

1. "Conrad's Horror of Darkness," J. D. Thomas, The Rice Institute.

2. "Aurora Leigh, a Study in Victorian Taste," Mrs. Edna Payne Caskey, Baylor University.

3. "Cooper's Shakespearean Chapter Headings," W. B. Gates, Texas Technological College.

4. "Notes on Certain Proper Names in Shakespeare," Robert A. Law, University of Texas.

5. "The Hamlet Criticism of Stephen Dedalus," William Peery, University of Texas.

**Appointment**

Roy Lamson, Jr., professor of English at Williams College, has been appointed historian to SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe) under Gen. Eisenhower's command. Prof. Lamson will write the history of the headquarters which covers the twelve nations in the North Atlantic Treaty organization with headquarters in Paris. He returns to the U.S. Army as a lieutenant colonel.

Prof. Lamson was selected for the post, a staff position created by Gen. Eisenhower, by Gen. Orlando Ward, chief of military history, Special Staff, U. S. Army. During World War II he helped organize the historical division of the Special Staff, the historical section of the 5th Army and the historical section of ETO. He also served as editor of the "American Forces in Action," a series of volumes of combat history.

In June, 1946, Prof. Lamson left the Army with the rank of major, General Staff Corps. He was awarded the Legion of Merit for his services.

"The Seventeenth Century New Letter" is edited for members of English Discussion Group VI: The Period of Milton, of the MLA, but under the editorial policy adopted in December, 1950, its contents will be broadened to cover all aspects of seventeenth-century civilization. Prime attention will be given to English language and literature, but foreign literatures, the art philosophy, and history will receive increasing attention.

"The Seventeenth Century New Letter" is published four times each year from Anderson Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. Subscriptions (\$1.00 per year, advance) should be sent to the Editor at that address. Check should be payable to J. Max Patrick.

Editor, J. Max Patrick, Anderson Hall, University of Florida.

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Abstracts Editor, Don A. Keister, University of Akron.

Books Editor, Thomas B. Stroup, University of Kentucky.

Back Issues, Ray L. Armstrong, Lehigh University.

Editorial Secretary, Herschel Sikes, Florida.

Erratum: We note, with apologies, that Prof. Lionel Stevenson, president of the California CEA, should have been designated, in the *CEA CRITIC*, as head of the English department, not at U.C.L.A., but at the University of Southern California.

**New 1951 Editions**

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